DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 341 826 CE 060 320

TITLE Education and the World of Work.
INSTITUTION Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris (France).
PUB DATE Oct 91
NOTE 5p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT Innovation in Education; n60 Oct 1991

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Development; *Education Work Relationship; Foreign Countries; Humanities; Labor Force Development; Postsecondary Education; Professional Continuing Education; Skill Development; Social Sciences; *Technical Education; *Vocational Education; Vocational Followup
IDENTIFIERS *Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development; Partnerships in Education

ABSTRACT

This Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) newssheet is devoted to a cluster of activities connected by a common theme: the relationship between education and the economy. Four areas of activity are discussed: (1) further education and training of the labor force; (2) the changing role of vocational and technical education and training; (3) higher education and employment; and (4) partners in education--the new partnership between business and schools. The first activity investigates ways in which adult workers in the OECD member countries update their skills and competencies. The second activity is concerned with preparing young people for jobs in upper and postsecondary vocational and technical education and with training within the context of social and economic change. The third activity of the Education Committee consists of three projects: follow-up of higher education graduates into working life, the humanities and social sciences, and developments in continuing professional education. The fourth study, on partnerships, concludes that positive educational advantages can be realized. (NLA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED341826

INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

NEWS FROM THE OECD – PARIS

60

OCTOBER 1991

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J R West

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

This news sheet gives brief notice to topics arising during the preceding four months from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's continuing work in the field of Education. Most of this is carried out by means of two parallel programmes, one being the responsibility of the OECD Education Committee and the other of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). Enquiries for further information should be addressed to the Director, Social Affairs, Manpower and Education, OECD, 2 rue Andre Pascal, 75775 PARIS CEDEX 16, or as may be indicated in the text. Editors are welcome to use any of this material provided the source is acknowledged.

EDUCATION AND THE WORLD OF WORK

This issue is devoted, like the previous one, to a cluster of activities connected by a common theme. The theme this time is the relationship between education — viewed as an investment in the development of individuals and society — and the economy, a relationship which has constantly figured in OECD's programme of educational activities.

Further education and training of the labour force

The purpose of this activity, launched in 1988, is to investigate how well OECD Member countries are equipped to upgrade and update the skills and competences of their adult workers. It was prompted by concerns about potential skills shortages and mismatches expressed at the 1988 high-level conference on *Education and the Economy in a Changing Society*. The combination of slowing growth in the labour force, rapidly changing occupational requirements, and the continuing existence of large numbers of workers with limited initial education, were seen as impeding the structural adjustments so urgently needed if economic competitiveness and social progress were to be sustained.

The activity culminated in an *Intergovernmental Conference on Further Education and Training of the Labour Force*, attended by policy-makers, researchers, employers and trade unionists, which was held in Paris on 26-28 June 1991. Although recognising that the skills and competences of labour forces were central to economic development, the conference noted that there were large shortfalls in qualifications and that existing public policies and actions by the social partners were insufficient to remedy them. Aside from the negative effects on productivity that arose, there were a number of ominous social consequences:

— The adverse influence of low levels of initial qualifications on individual earnings and employability was compounded by the fact that the least qualified were the least likely to participate in the kinds of further education and training that might offset their disadvantages;

— Emerging corporate structures and business strategies were leading to a shift towards more tenuous forms of employment, including fixed-term contracts and part-time work, frequently in the secondary labour market. These new forms brought with them restricted opportunities for training or career development.

The division between good and bad jobs was widening as training, a prerequisite for narrowing the divide, concentrated on the former. The threat of a deepening fissure in society and irreversible inequities was real. Breaking the vicious circle whereby low initial qualifications led to limited opportunities for employment as well as for the further education and training that could, in turn, improve job prospects required general recognition of four desiderata:

i) In contrast to initial education and training, further education and training were an area in which the economic and social stakes, as well as the responsibility for action, should be shared across the public sector and among the social partners;

ii) In view of the highly differentiated demand for education and training, and the diversity of provision, there were compelling arguments in favour of relying heavily on market forces to determine the allocation of resources. At the same time, it was necessary for the public authorities to intervene in order to ensure the smooth operation of such markets and to protect the interests of those who, because of poverty or unemployment, were disadvantaged;

iii) Further education and training should be seen in the wider context of lifelong learning, which was the prerequisite for successful social and cultural as well as economic integration in societies and economies that increasingly penalised individuals unable to gain access to and interpret information, or otherwise handicapped in their use of information technology. It was especially important to reinforce the connection between further education and training and lifelong learning as a means of overcoming the problems of individuals denied access because of the nature of their work or unemployment. Learning off and on the job are mutually reinforcing. Lifelong learning for purposes other than enhancing job performance can, in fact, enhance learning in connection with work, and vice versa.

iv) There was an urgent need to close the gap between those who had and those who did not have access to further education and training. This was partly a question of adequate financing. Above all, it was essential to improve the capacity of initial schooling to meet the learning needs of the educationally disadvantaged. The first priority of schools should be to find ways of reducing the number of early leavers.

A fuller analysis of the state of further education and training in OECD countries and a report on the Intergovernmental Conference will be published in 1992. In the meantime, the conclusions of the conference and an annotated bibliography of the documents already published are available from the Secretariat.

The changing role of vocational and technical education and training

Preparing young people for working life

In December 1989 the Education Committee endorsed a new activity on "The changing role of VOcational and TEChnical education and training (VOTEC)". The focus of this activity is the preparation of young people for working life in upper and post-secondary vocational and technical education and training within the context of social and economic change. Three methods of work are being used that are complementary.

First, in response to a common framework of questions and guidelines, participating countries are preparing *analytical reports* giving information about policy discussions, recent reforms and developments, and illustrating the ways in which VOTEC is meeting needs in four sectors of the economy (construction, tourism, printing and machine-tools). The reports address issues that concern all Member countries: bridging the gap between general education and VOTEC; broadening the base of VOTEC itself; strengthening the links between industry and educational institutions; assessing, certifying and recognising skills and competences; ensuring organisational flexibility and effectiveness.

Secondly, a series of *seminars* is taking place in volunteer host countries in order to allow practitioners, decision-makers and the social partners to discuss these and other issues.

Thirdly, two *groups of experts* are examining in a small sample of Member countries *i)* the changing patterns of young people's participation in VOTEC and the reasons for them; *ii)* learning processes and methods of instruction in different environments, with particular emphasis on applied learning and the integration of "thinking and doing".

Linkages in VOTEC

This was the theme of the first policy seminar, which took place in Phoenix, Arizona in March 1991, at the invitation of the United States Department of Education. Major concern was expressed about the *contradictory demands and pressures* that oblige VOTEC simultaneously to serve economic purposes and to compensate for social imbalances and inequities produced at least partly by the very economic dynamism and competitiveness that it is called upon to support and strengthen.

The *status* of VOTEC, and its ambiguous relationship with general education were also seen to be problematic. It was suggested that solutions could not be found through unilateral policies and strategies. Rather, there had to be a comprehensive view of preparation for working life, including not only VOTEC but general studies at all levels.

Other topics related to the difficulty of combining practical and theoretical learning, and the need for policy co-ordination and integration both across educational sectors and between education and economic and social policies.

Implications of technological innovation and economic change

The second policy seminar was hosted by the Federal Office of Industry and Labour (OFIAMT) in Switzerland in September 1991. Visits to vocational schools and enterprises enabled participants to examine concretely the learning needs of young people and employers' requirements in response to increasingly sophisticated production technology, and to the restructuring which had, only recently, painfully affected watch-making and other specialised industries.

The federal context of highly decentralised responsibility for education and training provided interesting examples of spontaneous and effective co-operation between vocational schools and enterprises. Vocational schools play an important role in industrial development by putting the technical expertise of teachers and trainers at the disposal of local enterprises. In return, that co-operation keeps teachers and trainers up to date about technological innovation, allows schools and training centres to organise more advanced stages of practical training, and facilitates the placement of trainees at the end of their apprenticeship or school-based vocational education and training. At the same time, VOTEC is confronted, as in all countries, with the problem of how to broaden its base and attract more able students without discouraging those young people with learning difficulties at school. One finding of the seminar was that the role of key professional organisations such as chambers of crafts, industry and commerce, and trade unions is particularly important in negotiating generally acceptable amendments to training regulations and in assuring the quality of training provision and the validity of certificates or diplomas.

Future activities

The country studies as well as the reports of the two expert groups will make available the first cross-national comparable results in 1993. In the meantime, a third policy seminar on the assessment, certification and recognition of skills and competences will take place in October 1992 in Portugal.

Higher education and employment

This activity of the Education Committee comprises three projects:

i) The flows of graduates from higher education and their entry into working life;

ii) The particular case of the humanities and social sciences;

iii) Recent developments in continuing professional education.

A meeting of national representatives and experts in December 1989 discussed in detail the content of the work under each project and the nature of the inputs that were required. Since then, many countries have submitted substantive contributions, which are now available as documents for general distribution.

The main findings of the Secretariat reports will be discussed at a second meeting of national representatives and experts in January 1992, with a view to preparing for a high-level conference, to be held in Paris on 15-17 June 1992.

The flows of graduates

This analysis of graduate flows, which is still in progress, uses several variables besides unemployment rates, including under-employment, salaries, temporary or part-time employment and status in the labour market, not to speak of less conventional variables.

The analysis indicates an overall increase in the number of high-level jobs. In most countries there is a buoyant demand for well-qualified personnel, despite the continuing overall problem of unemployment or under-employment.

The main development in the 1980s was the shift from employment in the public sector, including education, to employment in private enterprises. Although access to employment remained difficult for certain categories of graduates, the change was on the whole beneficial.

A particularly important conclusion is that, in most countries, the consequence of the expansion and diversification of higher education systems is that a substantial percentage of all those entering the labour market in the 1990s will have received a post-secondary education — in some countries about one half — while in the 1970s graduate flows could still have been considered minor in overall labour force flows. The enormity of this change creates a new context for labour market policies, which will be examined in OECD *Employment Outlook 1993*.

The humanities and social sciences

The increasing demand for higher education has been largely met in many countries by expanding provision in the humanities and social sciences. This has resulted in a polarised situation. On the one hand, there are discipline-oriented studies, leading to academic employment for a relatively small number of graduates. On the other, graduates from the applied social sciences are more likely to find employment in the private sector, where there has been an increase in job opportunities in recent years. The whole question of the occupational relevance of the humanities and social sciences needs to be investigated and a new balance struck between general/academic and professionally-oriented courses.

Recent developments in continuing professional education

Focusing on highly qualified personnel, this project considers the mission of post-secondary institutions in continuing professional education. Particular attention is being paid to the training market in order to discuss that mission in the light of the programmes of other providers. The evidence reveals the limited role that higher

education institutions have so far played in many countries. Numerous training courses are offered by enterprises, professional associations and profit-making agencies.

The quickening demand for retraining and updating, together with the demand for more well-qualified personnel, call for stronger relationships between higher education institutions and the world of work. Serving the new clientele, with its wide range of needs and expectations, raises such issues as access and certification (academic- versus competence-based recognition); changes in financing (continuing professional education as a self-supporting activity); teachers' problems (career and re-training issues).

Partners in education: The new partnership between business and schools

There is a gathering movement in OECD countries to open up public education systems to a wider range of influences. This has both negative and positive origins: on the one hand, a critique of the alleged deficiencies of education systems thought to be out of touch with the current needs of society and the labour market; on the other, a belief that greater exposure to outside influences could enrich the content of education and help improve its methods.

A CERI study on partnerships, to be published in early 1992, concludes that positive advantages can indeed be realised, even if many partnerships orginate in a negative external appraisal of education. The study focuses specifically on business links with schools — a growing phenomenon hitherto little studied at the international level. Many such links are superficial, but some are having a significant impact. The report argues that, far from corrupting the purposes of schools for commercial ends, businesses often assist them to achieve some of their own cherished goals. The findings are set out in more detail below.

The study was carried out as part of CERI's human resources project under the mandate that expired in 1991. Under the new mandate, a separate project is being launched, which ultimately aims to take a broader look at partnerships, considering new education links with communities and parents as well as with businesses. But a more immediate objective of the project is to disseminate the findings of the report. An intergovernmental conference will be held in the Netherlands in May 1992, organised jointly by CERI and the Dutch Education Ministry. There are also plans to produce a video to be distributed by the network of contacts that has been built up. This strategy, a new departure for CERI, is intended to serve a broad audience of actors in the public and private sectors interested in partnerships both as practitioners and as policy-makers.

The report was put together on the basis of consultations with a group of international experts, a collection of written materials, and 24 illustrative studies of specific schemes visited briefly by the Secretariat. Thus, it combines a commentary on broad trends with short reports on concrete examples which are used to illustrate various themes. This approach attempts to ground arguments in factual example, without pretending that the case studies constitute formal research.

The report examines the processes that make partnerships work, their aims in relation to education, and the influence of national education policies on their impact. The process of partnership, it argues, is dynamic: businesses do not come to education with a carefully-designed agenda that is imposed on the system, but constructs goals through their involvement. This helps explain why, initially, many partnerships seem to be more about cultivating friendships between two mutually suspicious sides than about securing actual changes in education. As partnerships mature, they start to address educational change more directly, sometimes broadening the coalition from a link between a company and a school to include all the actors required to produce systemic reform. This is, of course, a paradigm rather than a description of what every partnership achieves.

The two most important objectives that partnerships have tried to achieve have been to make vocational education more relevant to pupils' future careers and to adapt the content of general education to the realities of the modern world. The second of these goals is the more ambitious. Many companies have pointed out that a new set of skills is required in the workplace: they no longer want schools to turn out workers who simply know how to obey orders and follow a disciplined routine; it is the ability to take initiatives, solve unfamiliar problems and work in non-hierarchical teams that is becoming the key to commercial success. These goals match surprisingly well with long-held educational ambitions to enable children to become enterprising learners, formulating and solving problems for themselves rather than passively receiving knowledge from an all-knowing pedagogue. Partnerships achieve such goals most effectively when matched by system-wide initiatives within education. A good example is the United Kingdom's Technical and Vocational Education Initiative.

As illustrated by the decision of the Netherlands to host the 1992 conference, education ministries are starting to see partnerships as increasingly important. CERI's concern is to identify ways in which they can play a constructive part in promoting educational change.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Alternatives to Universities, OECD, Paris, 1991, 85 pp. $22, £12, FF 90.

This report charts the recent development of the non-university sector of post-secondary education in several OECD countries. It shows that during the 1980s this sector generally succeeded in enhancing its standing and recognition among students, employers, and the academic world. Its progress in the 1990s will depend on how it meets the challenge of greater competition from the universities on the one side, and the growing "third" sector — market-oriented and often private — on the other. The countries surveyed are Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Learning to Think: Thinking to Learn, an OECD/CERI report published by Pergamon Press, Oxford, United Kingdom, pp. 238. Hard back $62, paper back $27.50

The studies in this book formed the basis of a conference organised by the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation in July 1989, the purpose being to discuss and advance the state of knowledge about how young people think and reason. Thinking is a normal activity for every human being; ordinary life depends on the ability to think. Thus, the prime objectives of formal education in all disciplines have always been the refining and shaping of the powers of thought. This book explores three broad ways of thinking in the context of education: the "skills" approach; the "infusion" model; the belief that the traditional disciplines and pedagogy of education already provide for the development of thinking. It will be of interest to teachers and researchers in education, educational psychologists, educational administrators, and students of educational policy.

Hail and farewell

It is not the custom in this newsletter to mention the names of OECD staff. Recently, however, such important changes have taken place in the control and management of the programme of educational activities that we are sure our readers would wish to be informed. The changes also offer a suitable opportunity in this, the sixtieth issue of the newsletter in twenty years, to describe the administrative organisation of the educational sector and its place within the general structure of the OECD.

The OECD is subdivided into directorates, of which the most visible to the outside world is that for Economics and Statistics. The second largest directorate is that for "Social Affairs, Manpower and Education", known for short as SME. SME is subdivided, like other directorates, into divisions, including the *Education and Training Division* and a quasi-division in the form of the *Centre for Educational Research and Innovation*, commonly referred to as CERI. There are also two small specialist units: *Programme on Educational Building* (PEB) and *Institutional Management of Higher Education* (IMHE).

The Director of SME, who is also Director of CERI, is ultimately responsible for all educational activities. He is supported by a Deputy-Director for Education, who is also head of the Education and Training Division.

The work of the Education and Training Division is overseen by the Education Committee of OECD, which is comprised of representatives of Member countries who are as a rule senior civil servants of ministries of education. The work of CERI is guided by a Governing Board of 24 experts nominated by Member countries but operating in an individual capacity.

Two names above all others have been associated with the educational work of the OECD since its inception in 1961: James R. Gass and George S. Papadopoulos. J.R. Gass, who retired in March 1989, was in charge of educational affairs for over twenty years, and since 1974 in his capacity as the first Director of SME. It was he who made possible the creation of CERI in 1968 and who directed it for twenty-one years.

G.S. Papadopoulos, who retired in November 1990, became the first head of the newly formed Education Division in 1965, combining this post with that of Deputy-Director for all educational activities after 1968.

The new Director of SME and CERI is Thomas J. Alexander, formerly head of the Private Office of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The new Deputy-Director for Education is Malcolm Skilbeck, formerly Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University, Australia.

76271